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## ENGLAND'S RELIGIOUS DUTIES TOWARDS EGYPT.

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THE Church Congress takes a higher standpoint than that of a political platform, and, looking upon a wider horizon, sees further ahead.

I would, therefore, from our point of view, attempt to show how the highest religious duties towards Egypt are being put in our way, and that some of them are, almost against the will of those who are unconsciously carrying them out, already being done. Far from advocating the withdrawal of England's influence and power, I think, that even if she would, she could not evade grave responsibilities that have arisen, and as I believe in the future prosperity of Egypt as a dependent state, I also hope to see England's influence maintained. My second point will be to prove that, irrespective of what happens in the future, there is a special religious duty that England now owes to Egypt: it is the duty that is nearest to her there. Were England more careful about the religion and conduct of Englishmen in Egypt, she would be strengthened to accept even greater responsibilities, and the sharpest shafts that Copts or Mahommedans could use against her would lose their power.

Under present circumstances, how can we make Egyptians understand our religion?

I have sometimes thought that the regular Sunday service in the Prince of Wales' Nile Boat, where the Prince himself always read prayers, may have done more to show some Egyptians that England had a religion, than did the dark-shadowed glories of Tel-el-Kebir. But how little do we know the value of a victory. The military success over Arabi at Tel-el-Kebir may prove to be as important to the interests of Christianity in the East, and the future welfare of all people there, as did the peaceful occupation of Cyprus a few years before. Cyprus is the point from which we can look towards the Holy Land, and watch the crumbling to pieces of the Ottoman power. Egypt is a point from which we may touch and quicken with new life the pieces as they fall.

It was not until my fourth visit to Egypt that I began to think seriously about England's religious duties there. The time had arrived for her immediate action, but before anything was attempted, Arabi's rebellion began.

Within a few miles of Tel-el-Kebir, the railway and canal systems of

Egypt concentrate at a point where may, probably, be the future capital. Arabi foresaw this when he placed his forces at Tel-el-Kebir to defend Zag-a-zig. Close to the town are the remains of one of the strangest temples in the world. Before the Christian era, this temple had been forsaken by the Egyptians, but when persecutions were driving the Jews from Jerusalem, the high priest, relying upon a prophecy of Isaiah, begged and obtained the loan of this deserted temple to form a new centre for the worship of God. The prophecy of Isaiah seemed to him to be fulfilled. The Egyptian kings endowed the temple, and worship was offered there by Jews until Herod had beautified and restored the Temple at Jerusalem, the very Temple where our Saviour taught. The prophecy of Isaiah still remains only imperfectly fulfilled; but we may find that new foundations for the fulfilment were opened out by that victory at Tel-el-Kebir, which gave England a dominant, and, I hope, a permanent influence in Egypt. Part of the prophecy reads thus:—"The Lord shall smite Egypt. He shall smite and heal, and they shall return unto the Lord (Jehovah), and He shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them." In the heading of the nineteenth chapter of Isaiah in our English bibles, the prophecy is mentioned as "The calling of Egypt to the Church."\* The whole prophecy claims the closest study, there are various readings, and we must watch for the true in the development of events. The Coptic Christians still number 300,000 in Egypt, but they need the freedom and energy of another race, and a more perfect faith, to raise them from the lethargy and oppression that have kept them down.

The rising generation of Copts are not without hope, and part of the prophecy may apply to them. "In that day there shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. It shall be for a sign and a witness unto the Lord in the land of Egypt, for they shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and He shall send them a Saviour, and a great one, and He shall deliver them."

There is a splendid lighthouse at Port Said, casting its light all night far away out to sea to guide the navigators making for the canal. Were there the cross-crowned spire of a church near it, standing like a pillar on the border of the land, the cross shining all day in the constant sunshine, and visible as far as the plain of Zoan, where God worked miracles by the rod of Moses, the grandest, the most hopeful, prophecy about Egypt would seem about to be fulfilled. The land for this Church has already been secured! It is vested in the Bishop of London. I hold a copy of the title deeds in my hand. When shall the building begin?

I suggest another religious duty.

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\* There are various readings as to the name of the city. It is called the City of the Sun, the City of Destruction, the City of the Lion, the City of Righteousness, and, probably, could at different times in Egyptian history have been distinguished by each. It is one of the five cities in which the language of Canaan is to be spoken. We can scarcely call Hebrew the language of Canaan, although Arabic is, and as Canaan also means merchant, the prophecy may point to its extensive trade. The worship of the lioness, or of the cat, was once famous there, and images still are found. Heliopolis is nearer Cairo, but the temple near Zag-a-zig was, I believe, the chief Jewish Temple.

Between Tel-el-Kebir and Port Said, is the land of Goshen, the greater part is now a desolate waste. "The Sea of Reeds" has encroached upon it, and the waters of the Nile have been turned from places where once populous cities flourished in their pride. Were a freshwater canal made from the Tanic branch of the Nile to Port Said, hundreds of square miles would be reclaimed, prosperity, instead of poverty, would reign. Once let England accept that status in Egypt which her influence and religious duties would justify and permit, and the ruin that has followed upon Turkish misrule would be replaced by prosperity and joy. The embankments that kept out the salt water would rise again out of the desolation, and the fresh waters of the Nile would resume their place and fertilize the land. Having seen what the Chinese have done for the Delta of the Yangtze-Kiang, I could not but wish, as I wandered about Egypt, that similar industry and skill could be encouraged by England on the Delta of the Nile. If there is a religious duty to be done in a poverty-stricken district among a people who have been over-taxed and oppressed, it is to protect them from exactions, and to help them to have water and food on lands that might at last become their own. This is a nobler, a higher duty than that of protecting bondholders at the expense of the people, and would be better for the bondholders in the end.

There are different kinds of slavery; forced or inadequately requited labour is one, and is a sin not uncommon in Egypt, but it is from Egypt that the worst kind of slavery can be crushed. But how, and by whom shall this be done?

England is learning at least one religious duty from General Gordon at Khartoum. It is curious to contrast what he has accomplished with almost nothing but faith, while everything that could prevent failure and ensure success has been demanded, and supplied to another General, who had merely to ask for whatever he desired. Even though a duty may not be counted as religious at the first, a duty faithfully done under most pressing difficulties identifies itself with religion in the end. The famous soldier at Khartoum was glad of our prayers when he got no other help, and in the midst of war his mind was at peace; he could look for help from the slaves in the Soudan when there appeared to be little prospect of help from home. Some years ago he sent me a rough map of the sources of the Nile, when he was earnestly endeavouring to stop the slave trade there. He said "it was very grey-hair making work," but when he welcomes the expedition that has at last gone out to relieve him, and he sees the fleet of boats and the wonderful supplies that have been lavished to secure the comfort and safety of the men, I can fancy how he will forget all about himself, and say, "This is all that is needed to put down slavery on the Nile!"

By fortuitous circumstances, almost against her will, England has been forced to take up positions on the Red Sea, as well as to send this wonderful expedition to the Soudan. The western littoral of the Red Sea is in her power, and by a system of careful registration and guarantees over all native vessels on the coast, and with a restless little fleet of gunboats, the efforts to suppress the slave trade would ultimately succeed if there were co-operation on the Nile. Having given help to Egypt without conditions in a warfare to protect the Govern-

ment, surely the protection of the *people* might be made complete upon condition that the days of slavery are done.

We play into the hands of the Mahdi when we make England obnoxious to the natives by giving protection to the Turks, whom we will not allow to interfere, but we lay the axe at the root of the selfishness of Mahommedanism when we proclaim, in the interests of humanity, liberty to the slave.

Let England take this up as a religious duty ; she will meet with encouragement, instead of opposition, from every Christian state, though her zeal might create rivals in such a noble cause.

It is no part of England's religious duty to interfere in religious differences in other States, therefore, interference with the Mahdi's religious ideas is apart from the subject we discuss. It would be curious, however, if the expedition sent to relieve Gordon and his *protégés* should be made instrumental in bringing about the freedom of a race. England may find her best allies in the slaves that she sets free.

I am not speaking of impossibilities—faith is ignorant of the word. I am speaking of religious duties when opportunities and responsibilities come together in her way. The Almighty makes use of our actions, though He leaves independent our thoughts.

History repeats itself. The history of the Mamelukes—the word means slaves—shows how slaves have more than once assumed their freedom in Egypt. Under their sway Egypt attained prosperity nearly equal to that of her ancient days. When Napoleon was in Egypt he marched an army into the Holy Land. He was urged to go to Jerusalem, but answered, “Jerusalem is not in the order of my campaign.” He went forward to Acre, and met with a repulse that made him return to Egypt. He soon withdrew his army, and his influence there was gone! If religious duties are not in the order of our campaign, our forces may again be withdrawn, all our opportunities in Egypt may be lost, and the Soudan become again the slave market, until slaves can conquer it for themselves. It is indeed a hopeful sign that one result of the troubles in Egypt is that a treaty has been signed by England and Abyssinia to prevent slavery. Can we leave this as a religious duty for the Abyssinians, and neglect it ourselves, when we have Gordon in the Soudan?

About a year before the rebellion of Arabi, I was led to make inquiries into the religious condition of the English in Egypt, especially at those points where the greatest number come. Under proper authority I went out. At Port Saïd the discomfort of the sailors in the Egyptian hospital was deplorable. There was no Church of England clergyman at either Suez or Port Saïd. I remained until committees were formed at Port Saïd for church and hospital, the free grant of land, worth fully £3,000, was obtained ; a year ago a chaplain was sent out. His chief work is ministering to the sailors on board ship and in hospital. £1,000 have been collected for a British Hospital, and £300 subscribed towards the church. The fittings of a Hospital, founded with much care at Cairo, but from economical considerations it was ordered to be closed, when tens of thousands of pounds were being expended in less useful ways, have most generously been transferred by the founder for the use of the



British Hospital at Port Saïd when it is built. A British Hospital at Port Saïd might become, if there were a dispensary attached to it, the central point whence blessings might flow through the Eastern Delta, and the hospital itself would be the greatest boon that could be granted to our sailors, who are so apt to be maimed in the pressure of speed, the grand desideratum of the day. One hundred and ninety-nine English sailors had to be sent into the miserable Egyptian hospital last year. I could tell sad stories of the sorrows there, and I plead with all my soul that the people of England will accept it as a religious duty to provide, not only a Hospital, but a Church upon the land that has been obtained at that part of the world which separates, or rather, I might say, which now unites, England with her Imperial possessions in the East. It is a most important place, and were England to accept the Congress motto, "Be just, and fear not," the principle that "righteousness exalteth a nation" would guide her path in the way of peace, and, instead of being harassed by many little wars, she would gain influence, not only in Egypt, but even through the wild regions of Arabia, and among the hills and valleys of the Holy Land.

Medical Missions in various districts would prove our charity and good-will. The gift of healing is not really lost to the Church when she brings it as a blessing to the afflicted and the poor. By efforts which England could encourage, misery could be alleviated, lives could be saved in that same Egypt where so many wounds have been made, so many lives have been taken, among the very people who scarcely know what to think of the friendship the English profess.

The religious interests that are inseparable from Egypt are so important we should not let them pass away when we hear of some little successes. England should not assume the passive expression of the Sphynx when there are active duties to be done. It may be the fashion of the day for the Church to watch and wait, but surely the time has come to move forward, and where there is work to be done for the good of others let her lead the way.

I shall never forget visiting a number of Jews at Suez, who had been driven out of the southern part of Arabia, and had come by Egypt on their way to the Holy Land; there were their priests, their wives, and their children, and as they sat calmly in the Khan listening to the reading of the Law, as one after another went up to read a portion, coming events seemed to cast their shadows before. These people passed through the canal that has become the highway of the world; they were making for that same goal which the Israelites made for under the guidance of Moses, but they were going another way. Shall the Church remain passive when there is much to be done where England's influence might be so strong. The opening out of Egypt may lead to new discoveries that will quicken the energies of explorers after the history of the past, but religious duties lead us rather to look for opportunities in the present to clear the way of every obstacle that might hinder the spread of Christ's kingdom in the world.

Let us beware lest we take more interest in, and spend more money upon, excavating old temples in Egypt than in building and founding new churches there. There is much to be discovered that is open to our view, and if we accept the Scriptures as our guide in preference to

imaginations, we shall find more truths to quicken our interest in the land which still contains people who are in a bondage that is tighter than that of Pharaoh, for it has possession of the mind.

The subjects I have touched upon are of more than National importance. I have pointed to what England might eventually do, but I have also shown that works have already been begun in which every Englishman may help who wishes to fulfil his religious duty towards Egypt now.











